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Serial no. 09/876,351
Filed 6/6/2001
Attorney docket no. BEA920010008US1

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In the specification:

Please replace paragraph 37, on pages 8-9 of the specification as originally filed, with the following paragraph.

FIG. 2 shows an example two-node system 200 in conjunction with which embodiments of the invention may be implemented. The first node 202 and the second node 204 correspond to different servers in the system 200, but they may also correspond to different partitions of the same server. ~~In such instance, the partitions 208a, 208b, 208c, and 208d of the first node 202 are not distinctive and represent the same partition, and the partitions 218a and 218b of the second node 204 are also not distinctive and represent the same partition. Similarly, in such instance, the connection management mechanism 226 of the first node 202 and the connection management mechanism 228 of the second node 204 represent the same connection management mechanism.~~ While the system 200 includes a first node 202 and a second node 204, the invention itself may be implemented in conjunction with systems having fewer or greater numbers of nodes. For example, secure virtual communication channels may be established between user or kernel processes of different partitions of the same node, or between user or kernel processes of different partitions of three or more nodes.

Please replace paragraph 50, on pages 13-14 of the specification as originally filed, with the following paragraph.

Next, the kernel agent, for the user process 216, creates a channel key (504), which the connection management mechanism 226 stores in its channel key table (506). The mechanism 226 stores the channel key in an entry of the channel key table that corresponds to the channel state table entry created by the kernel agent on behalf of the user process 216. The mechanism

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226 sends the channel key, along with the identifications of the partition 208d of FIG. 2 and the kernel agent (user processes) 216 and 220b, to the connection management mechanism 228 (510) (508). The transmission of this information is part of a connection request by the user process 216 to establish a virtual secure communication channel to receive messages from the user process 220b. The mechanism 228 then receives the key and the identifications from the connection management mechanism 226 (510).